

3rd June 2008

**Submission to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel
Re. Importation of Cattle Semen**

Dear Deputy Ryan

I take this opportunity to explain my personal position regarding the importation of bull semen into Jersey on the grounds that others have quoted me in correspondence and debate on this issue.

Firstly, I am a Jerseyman and was brought up living with my family on my uncle's farm, Haut de l'Orme, Trinity, where, from a very early age, I had a passion for Jersey cattle. My uncle, John Rondel, was a major cattle breeder and exporter and I gained my early experiences from him. Upon leaving Hautlieu School, I was employed for six years in the office of the Royal Jersey Agricultural & Horticultural Society where I learned about the Jersey breed in the Island and through reading and meeting many international visitors, gained knowledge of the breed overseas.

In 1970, I was employed as manager of the Jersey Artificial Insemination Centre Limited and was responsible for semen collection, processing, marketing etc. That company, started by twelve forward-looking breeders under the chairmanship of the late Earl of Jersey, was the first artificial insemination operation in the Island and was taken over by the States of Jersey in 1975. At that point in time, the Island government was only interested in providing a local insemination service to farmers and our company was changed to an export-only one, supplying semen and cattle from Jersey to many countries. Indeed, since its inception in 1968, the company, now known as JISEX Ltd (Jersey Island Semen Exports Ltd) has exported Island Jersey genetics to forty-five countries.

From the late 1960s until the early 1980s, trade for semen from Island bulls was reasonable but declining, and in order for the company to survive the new interest of British dairymen in overseas genetics, in 1984, a decision was made to import semen from some New Zealand sires into the United Kingdom. In 1986, I took over the company from Lord Jersey and have owned it since. By that time, we were marketing semen in the United Kingdom from bulls located in Canada, Denmark and later on, the USA. Today, we have a major share of the market in the UK for international pure-bred Jersey semen and regularly visit and advise British Jersey cattle breeders on breeding their herds. Today, sales of semen from the Island in the UK is almost nil, with breeders preferring to use semen from the USA, Canada and Denmark in particular.

Aside from my work with JISEX, I was secretary of the World Jersey Cattle Bureau from 1976 to 2005 and I am currently Vice President for Europe for that organization. Since 1976, I have travelled to over forty countries to study the Jersey cow, and occasionally act as an international judge, and I have written countless articles on Jersey cattle breeding and edited journals and authored books on the subject.

I have detailed my history in order to explain my total dedication to the Jersey cow and to point out that all my working life has been devoted to the improvement of the cow as an international authority on the breed.

I also declare that if the importation of Jersey semen is allowed, my company will be offering semen to Island breeders. As a leading supplier of international Jersey semen in Great Britain it is natural that we will do so, but the intention is that all semen will be actually imported through the RJA&HS's trading arm, Jersey Island Genetics Limited. Our expertise lies in the knowledge of the breed and supplying the best breeding materials to farmers. I stress, however, that this commercial reason is not why I strongly support the importation of semen into Jersey as it will have only a small

effect on our annual sales, but because I am really concerned that the Island's breeders are given an opportunity to compete on a level playing field with the rest of the "Jersey" world.

Having been at the sharp end of the debate (as the immediate past President of the RJA&HS) I feel that a number of inaccurate comments relating to the Jersey cow have been made and I would like to have an opportunity to correct these misconceptions.

Firstly, the Jersey breed has become the world's second numerically largest dairy breed and is by no means whatsoever to be treated as a "rare breed". Despite observations from some that we have unique genetics or characteristics, this is not so. Indeed, having exported cattle from the Island for more than two hundred years, we have, by doing so, lost some of the original genes that were in the make-up of the Jersey. This is visibly evidenced by the fact that we used to have certain colour characteristics in the breed which are now lost (very light silver grey cows; mulberry (almost black) cows etc). What other characteristics have been exported is less easy to see, but having seen thousands of photos of cows of fifty to a hundred years ago, we seem to have lost some of the revered features in the bone structure of today's Island cows. Today, we do see pure Jerseys in other countries with a finer bone structure and original colouring which have bred on from animals exported decades ago.

Comments about the production of Jerseys in various parts of the world have also been misleading. Through breeding to the best genetics available, different countries have achieved Jersey cows that suit their requirements. For instance, the North-American Jerseys in the USA are highly productive (yes, they are well managed and have excellent feedstuffs available, and some do enhance production with rBST) but their actual gene make-up, with only pure Jersey breed genes, has improved the production of milk over all other Jerseys. Canadian Jerseys are known for their outstanding style and bone structure – Danish Jerseys have concentrated for a hundred years on increasing the butterfat and protein levels of the cow – New Zealand Jerseys are bred for grazing and are considered superior to others for that ability. How do we know that these characteristics are not influenced by local conditions of feeding, environment, management etc? Simply because the international exchange of genetics has proven that if one uses, say, a Danish sire in another country, he will inevitably raise the butterfat and protein naturally in his offspring. This is the same for all those populations.

Having been the international secretary for the breed for nearly thirty years, I can say with confidence that the Jersey Herd Books of countries that market genetics are entirely reliable. Yes, these countries do have parts of their herd books that can include a grading up system, but this is clearly defined, and we are able to observe the full pedigree of an animal going right back to its Island roots without any possible "other breed" intervention.

May I explain that the only sources for importing Jersey semen are the following countries; Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand and the USA. These are the main dairy countries that can also meet the veterinary requirements for international transfer of semen. Other countries in Europe can also provide semen but certainly at this time, none of them are involved in the export of Jersey semen, except the UK in a small way. The five main players in the breed are the ones stated.

Comments have been made regarding the production of Island cattle versus, say, the UK, and that we milk record all our animals but the UK does not. Under the international rules of milk recording (a global organization known as ICAR, which is based in Sweden) a farmer has to milk record all his cows and cannot record just a few selected ones. Some farmers do not milk record at all, but the pedigree Jersey population in the UK is virtually all recorded in the same way as our cattle. This means that the comparisons are accurate.

Breeders of pedigree cattle and other animals always strive to improve their stock – that is the main reason for maintaining a pure pedigree status. Around the world they have opportunities to make these improvements by using the genetics available; usually these genetics derive from the expertise

of other like-minded people who are also dedicated to their specific interest. Within the Jersey breed there are many dedicated breeders who have studied their breeding for generations and produced Jerseys that are, in the eyes of cattlemen, both correct in conformation and efficient in production. A number of those involved in the breed in this Island also want the opportunity to improve their stock, not only to produce more efficient cows for production, but also for enhanced health traits and body conformation of their cows. They are the keepers of the breed and should be respected for their dedication to their work. The least they can expect is the availability of the tools to do their work more efficiently and bring back the pride that was more prevalent in the past.

Respectfully yours

Derrick I Frigot